

Message Text

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ORIGIN EB-07

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EMIN, TH

SUBJECT: TIN - TIN SMUGGLING

REF: BANGKOK 461

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE, ENTITLED "MALAYSIA MOVES TO STOP
TIN SMUGGLING," APPEARED IN JANUARY 12, 1976 ISSUE OF US
TRADE PUBLICATION "METALS WEEK":

2. BEGIN QUOTE THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT IS TAKING STEPS
TO STEM THE FLOW OF ILLEGALLY MINED TIN ORE BEING SHIPPED
INTO THE COUNTRY FROM THAILAND WITH FALSE BURMESE
CERTIFICATES. IT HAS ORDERED THE MINES DEPARTMENT AND THE
CUSTOMS AND EXCISE SERVICE TO IMPROVE THEIR SURVEILLANCE
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OF TIN IMPORTS.

THE MOVE FOLLOWS THE DISCOVERY THAT MALAYSIA'S FIGURES SHOW THAT IT IS IMPORTING ABOUT 4,000 METRIC TONS OF "BURMESE" MATERIAL ANNUALLY, WHILE BURMA'S TOTAL EXPORTS ARE ONLY 600 METRIC TONS PER YEAR.

ACCORDING TO INDUSTRY SOURCES IN MALAYSIA, THE 3,400 METRIC TONS PER YEAR OF "BURMESE" TIN UNACCOUNTED FOR IS REALLY

COMING FROM SOUTHERN THAILAND, WHERE ILLEGAL MINING IS A WAY OF LIFE. IN FACT, THAI OFFICIALS NOW ESTIMATE THAT 2,000 METRIC TONS OF TIN CONCENTRATES HAVE BEEN SMUGGLED OUT OF THE COUNTRY UNDER FALSE BURMESE CERTIFICATES. THE MINERS SELL THEIR ORE TO DEALERS OPERATING IN LEAGUE WITH SMUGGLERS WHO SHIP IT TO PENANG, THEREBY AVOIDING THE 22 PERCENT THAI ROYALTY.

THE PENANG SMELTERS REFUSE TO BE DRAWN INTO THE ARGUMENT AND CLAIM THAT THEY BUY THE ORE FROM LICENSED MALAYSIAN DEALERS AND FEEL NO MORAL OBLIGATION TO INVESTIGATE THE ORE'S ORIGIN ONCE IT IS LEGALLY IN THE COUNTRY. AS ONE SMELTER OFFICIAL PUT IT, "THE SMELTERS CAN'T STOP THE SMUGGLING BY REFUSING TO TAKE THE TIN BECAUSE IT WILL BE SHIPPED ELSEWHERE. THIS HAS TO BE STOPPED AT THE SOURCE." END QUOTE. SISCO

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